

# WORLD READY?

## A NEW VIEW OF THE GLOBAL STUDENT MARKETPLACE

Many of New England's 270 colleges and universities are truly international institutions—magnets for foreign faculty, scholars and students. But the world is flat, as the popular book says. Nations that once sent their best and brightest to New England for college now boast their own world-class higher education systems. Is New England prepared for the challenges and opportunities offered by a shrinking world? What's the worldwide status of the New England higher education "brand"?

CONNECTION asked a selected group of educators and interested people from New England and beyond to explore these and other crucial issues in international education, globalization, immigration and the future of New England.

## Why They Come

### New England's Lure to the International Student

ALLAN E. GOODMAN

Recently, a minister of higher education briefed me about a major new investment his government is making in sending graduate students abroad. "We want them to be razor-sharp," he said. "And to go to your top schools, the Ivy League."

While money and qualifications were not necessarily going to be problems, I had to spend some time explaining what the Ivy League was. His definition did not include some schools that are in this group (Cornell and Dartmouth) and did include at least two that are not (MIT and Stanford). He also held some misconceptions about programs of study. He was particularly concerned that each college have a good program in petroleum engineering as well as civil engineering and law.

I often meet officials and students abroad who act like the world is flat and that America has only three top schools ... which I can understand. In most countries, there are only a handful of top state-recognized universities, and it's inconceivable that one would want to have a degree from anyplace else. So, for example, Cairo University, which was built for a maximum of 20,000 students, now has more than 150,000. The story is the same for the mega-universities

in India, China, Indonesia, Turkey and Mexico. The world is seen as flat from many places also because in every list of the world's best universities, New England institutions (including Ivy League ones) occupy most of the top spots.

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The Institute of International Education's annual census of academic mobility, *Open Doors*, reveals that 7.5 percent of the nearly 600,000 international students attending U.S. colleges and universities last year went to campuses in New England (down somewhat from 8.3 percent in 2000). Many more than that number applied to New England campuses but were not accepted, so enrolled in another U.S. institution. Rankings help explain that. Seven of the universities ranked among the Top 20 around the world by researchers at the Shanghai Jiao Tong University were New England or Ivy League schools, and only three are outside the United States.

The lure of New England, which has just under 6 percent of America's 4,000 accredited colleges and universities, is not only that the region has so many excellent and welcoming schools—and, therefore, alumni who return home to encourage siblings and friends to come—but also that most people abroad initially are convinced that the region contains the only schools to which one should aspire to attend. Two in three New England colleges and universities are private—a large proportion as compared with other

regions in the United States. Over the years, my colleagues and I have detected an enduring preference for private institutions among those coming from abroad and a perception that equates private institutions with high quality.

Yet in New England and across the United States, state-funded public institutions, especially the large research universities, rank among the world's best in key fields of particular interest to international students. Community colleges—an American invention that is now spreading abroad—also are attracting growing numbers of international students to New England and the United States. In fact, though foreign enrollment in community colleges slowed somewhat after September 11, there was a 20 percent increase in foreign student enrollment in these institutions between 1999 and 2005.

The good news is that as the world becomes a flatter place, and as the nationwide enrollment of international students continues to rebound post-9/11, New England schools too continue to beckon.

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